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Committee on Financial Services
Ranking Democratic Member
Subcommittee on Housing
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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Michael E. Capuano

7th District, Massachusetts

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MB
competitive
ownership
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licensing

May 5, 2015

Chairman Tom Wheeler
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

I am writing to request information on the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) timeline for making low-power radio licenses available. My office has been contacted by several constituents who are interested in learning more about the application process, including when the FCC will next open a low power window.

I would appreciate any information that your office can provide on this process. If there are no plans at this time to open a low power window, I respectfully request that the FCC reconsider and take steps to make low power radio licenses available. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress





OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

June 3, 2015

The Honorable Michael E. Capuano
U.S. House of Representatives
1414 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Capuano:

Thank you for your letter regarding how communities can be served through low power FM (LPFM) radio stations. I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

The LPFM service was designed to provide non-profit entities an opportunity to broadcast niche programming to smaller areas, such as neighborhoods. To that end, the Commission has licensed hundreds of LPFM stations over the years and more recently has granted nearly 2,000 construction permits for new LPFM stations from applications filed in the October – November 2013 filing window. The Media Bureau staff continues to process the remaining LPFM applications, including mutually exclusive applications (*i.e.*, where more than one entity has applied for the same channel).

At this point, it is unclear when the Commission will open another LPFM filing window. Additionally, it is unlikely that there would be many, if any, additional LPFM channels available in most urban markets due to spectrum congestion and interference concerns. However, interested entities could pursue other avenues to distribute their programming, absent a license from the FCC and beyond the frequently noted option to provide programming as an online radio station. For example, existing licensees have the ability to lease or “broker” programming time on broadcast stations to outside entities. Further, with many full-power radio stations transitioning to digital operations, there is the potential to lease one of a station’s several multicast or “HD” channels and to pair this digital signal with an analog FM translator to reach most listeners who continue to use analog radios.

Again, I appreciate your interest in these issues, and I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tom Wheeler